

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) voted to significantly expand federal funding for life-saving stem cell research, by co-sponsoring and voting for the DeGette-Castle Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (H.R. 3). The House passed this critical bill this afternoon by a strong bipartisan vote of 253 to 174.

“I am proud to join my colleagues in co-sponsoring and passing the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007, to ease restrictions hindering the American medical community’s efforts to be the preeminent innovator of this potentially life-saving technology.”

“Countless families have personally expressed to me their hope in the enormous potential of embryonic stem cell research. Whether it’s the 12-year-old boy in Gurnee enduring juvenile diabetes, the grandmother in Schaumburg confronting Alzheimer’s, the young mother fighting breast cancer or the families standing by their sides, I represent many inspiring constituents who are battling disease with a courage we all pray we will never need.

“This bill encourages American leadership in this area, while allowing U.S. scientists to help address emerging ethical concerns and define necessary parameters. I encourage the Senate and the President to join the House in supporting this reasonable, compassionate advancement in the battle against disease.”

More than 100 million Americans suffer from cancer, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, diabetes, and other debilitating diseases for which embryonic stem cell research holds great promise in finding new and better treatments and cures.

The DeGette-Castle bill would expand stem cell research by lifting the current restrictions President Bush placed on the embryonic stem cell lines that can be used for federally-funded research. Most of the stem cell lines authorized for federally-funded research under that policy can no longer be used for that purpose. The bill authorizes federal research funds only for stem cell lines generated from embryos that would otherwise be discarded by fertility clinics. The bill also creates an ethical framework that must be followed in conducting this research under the guidance of the National Institutes of Health.

Bean supported a similar bill last year that passed the House and Senate, but was vetoed by President Bush. The current bill now moves to the Senate where it is expected to pass. The President has threatened to veto the bill.

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